



*Homily – 6th Sunday of Easter 2011 (A)ⁱ
w. Commissioning of Pastoral Associates*

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*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels
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My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This is another beautiful day in the life of our Cathedral parish during this Easter season, as we commission three new pastoral associates. It is always a blessing to see the commitment of the People of God in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles — in so many ways and ministries.

I was thinking that the readings we have just heard this morning are very appropriate for our sisters who are going to be commissioned.

But they are also very good readings for all of us. Because these readings cause us to reflect on the meaning of our discipleship and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Our life of faith, as we all know, is a beautiful journey, my brothers and sisters.

We make progress in our journey of faith through following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and through our personal efforts to correspond to the graces that God gives us.

We are living in God's presence, always. He dwells within us by his grace, by his Holy Spirit.

This is the beautiful truth that we hear in today's Gospel. *God is with us. Always!* He is near to us every single second of our lives! He wants to walk with each one of us. He never leaves us alone.

Jesus promises in the Gospel today to send his Spirit to the Church. Since the very beginning on Pentecost day the Holy Spirit has been acting in the life of the Church.

We see that in our first reading today. We see Philip guided by the Spirit, boldly proclaiming Christ and being an instrument of healing.

This first reading also shows us an early example of the Sacrament of Confirmation. The apostles lay hands on those whom Philip has baptized and *they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*ⁱⁱ

And as it happened during the apostolic times, as we have just heard, it is still happening.

In this past month, I have had the privilege of celebrating this beautiful sacrament with many young people in parishes all around in our Archdiocese. Together with my brother bishops we are going all over the Archdiocese for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is a great blessing for all of us. I celebrated two Confirmations yesterday, I have one this evening. We are doing it all over the Archdiocese.

So I thought it would be good for all of us, as we see the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church since the very beginning to our time, to reflect a little bit on what it means for us.

Especially to think about the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Each one of us received these gifts in Baptism and they were strengthened in us by our Confirmation.

And these seven gifts are beautiful signs of God's love and care for each one of us.

God gives us the gift of *understanding* — to enlighten our minds to the beautiful truths of our Christian faith.

When we reflect on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we will be much more aware of how beautiful God's presence in our lives is.

He gives us the gift of *wisdom* so that we will seek God above all things and put him first in all our ordinary works and obligations.

The gift of *knowledge* enables us to perceive God's blessings all around us in his creation.

The Spirit's gift of *counsel* or good judgment is in a sense like our conscience. It helps us to make the right decisions and to follow God's commandments and the paths of holiness.

Sometimes we talk about having an angel who tells us to make good decisions. My brothers and sisters, it is a little more than an angel. It is the Holy Spirit — God — telling us to make the right decision. Choose good and avoid evil.

God gives us also the gift of *piety*, of reverence. so that we can love him with the trusting love of a child.

He gives us the gift of *courage* or fortitude so that we can deal with the challenges and temptations that we face in our faith daily.

Finally, he gives us the gift of *fear of the Lord* so that we will avoid occasions of sin and weaknesses.

These are such beautiful gifts! Obviously it is much better if we are aware of these gifts and we open our souls, our hearts, our minds to the action of the Holy Spirit, who is with us *always*.

God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. He is the One who is going to sanctify us.

So my brothers and sisters, let us renew today our devotion to the Holy Spirit and find a way to develop these gifts within us.

How can we do that?

Two practical steps. One way is to try to make frequent acts of the presence of God.

God is present in our lives every single second, as I have said. The challenge is that we have to be aware of God's presence in us.

So we can remind ourselves often during the course of each day that we are always in God's presence. We need to remember what Jesus tells us in the Gospel today — that the Holy Spirit dwells *with us* and *in us*.

So we need to find time to pray. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to inspire us to be committed in serving God and proclaiming Christ. We can do little things — just raising our minds to God, giving thanks for good things that happen to us, asking for help when there are challenges we are facing.

When we are on the freeways of Los Angeles, instead of just complaining, we can talk to God. I'm not sure we want to say to him, "Thank you for letting me be here on this freeway." But at least we can use that to be more in the presence of God.

A second practical suggestion. Every day to try to make to make little acts of love and charity every day. When we love, we are following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. The more we love, the more we are opening ourselves to his inspirations in our lives.

So let's ask the Holy Spirit to inflame our hearts with love! And again those are little things. Listening to somebody. Saying a nice word to somebody else. Even just working, whatever we are doing — doing it *for the love of God*.

And that is the way that we make progress in our journey of faith.

So let us always try to make a little progress in our spiritual life. Keep in mind those two practical suggestions. It may be useful to make acts of the presence of God and acts of love every day. To really allow the Holy Spirit to make us holy.

Because we are all called to holiness. It is not just for some special people. It is for all of us. And it is God who is calling us to do it and wants us to be saints!

We are near the end of May, the Month of Mary. So let us ask our Blessed Mother, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, to help us in these coming days as we prepare for the Feast of the Ascension, next Sunday, and then the Solemnity of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, two weeks from today.

Let us ask for the grace to be open to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit — so that *his* life increases within us, and so that we can grow in the love of God and the love of others.

ⁱ Readings: Acts 8:5–8, 14–17; Ps. 66:1–7, 16, 20; 1 Pet. 3:15–18; John 14:15–21.

ⁱⁱ *Catechism*, 1288, 1313.